

DECISION NOTICE
And
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
For the
Designation of the
RED CANYON BOTANICAL AREA

Powell Ranger District
Dixie National Forest

Garfield County, Utah

Responsible Official;

Jack A. Blackwell
Regional Forester
Intermountain Region
324 25th Street
Ogden, UT 84401

For Further Information Contact:

Ronald L. Rodriguez
Dixie National Forest
82 North 100 East
Cedar City, UT 84720

DECISION AND REASONS FOR THE DECISION:

The Dixie National Forest has prepared an Environmental Assessment for the designation of the Red Canyon Botanical area on the Powell Ranger District, Dixie National Forest. The recommendation for establishment of this area resulted from studies made since the Dixie National Forest Plan was finalized (1986). This recommendation is the result of an analysis of the factors listed in 36 CFR 294.1 and FSM 2372.2. Copies of these studies are available in the Supervisors Office of the Dixie National Forest. The proposed botanical area was subsequently reexamined to determine the effects of formal establishment. Pursuant to the authorities in FSM 2372 I have decided to designate the Red Canyon Botanical Area of approximately 212 acres in the Sec. 1, T. 36 S., R. 4 1/2 W. The Forest Plan of the Dixie National Forest (1986) is amended by changing portions of Management areas 2A (Semi-Primitive Recreation) and 7A (Timber Management) to Management Prescription 10C (Special Interest Areas).

This area of approximately 212 acres near the upper end of Red Canyon contains a truly remarkable concentration of 7 endemic plants which are only known to inhabit the Claron formation. These include *Castilleja parvula* var. *revelii*, *Cryptantha ochroleuca*, *Cymopterus minimus*, *Eriogonum aretioides*, *Lepidium montanum* var. *claronense*, *Penstemon bracteatus*, and *Silene petersonii*. Designating this area as a Botanical Area will add to the enjoyment of visitors to Red Canyon of the Dixie National Forest and help preserve the habitat of this remarkable plant concentration. This action does not adversely affect any minority, disadvantaged, or underrepresented population group. Alternative 2 has the cumulative effect of protecting seven species of sensitive plants from human caused degradation. These alternatives will not cumulatively add to area road closures within Red Canyon.

Three issues were identified during scoping. The first issue concerned what effect the designation would have on grazing. This area is located in a portion of the Blue Fly Cattle allotment that is classified as unsuitable range so there would be no effect on the allotment. The second issue concerned the effects off-highway vehicles may have on the Botanical Area. The Botanical Area is located in an area that is already closed to motorized travel by the Dixie National Forest Travel Map (1998). Through this decision I am extending the closed area approximately 100 yards below the ridge crest on the east side, which extends from the intersection of the Thunder Mountain Trail, 1/2 mile to the north. Extending this closure to below the ridge will have the effect of discouraging motorized travel to the ridge crest to see what is on the other side, further protecting the sensitive plants in the botanical area.

The third issue concerned the Botanical Area not being large enough to include additional populations of plants. This issue was analyzed in alternative 3.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Three alternatives were considered. Alternative 1 is the no action alternative, which would leave the area managed under Management Prescriptions 2A and 7A. This

alternative was not selected because it would not protect this remarkable concentration of plants that only inhabit the Claron Formation.

Alternative 2 designates approximately 212 acres as the Red Canyon Botanical Area pursuant to FSM 2372.05, and amends the Dixie Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan by changing the Management Prescription of this area to 10C. This area fits the Manual definition of an area that "contains plant specimens, plant groups, or plant communities that are significant because of their form, color, occurrence, habitat, location, life history, arrangement, ecology, rarity, or other features." (FSM 2372.05).

Alternative 3 would designate a Botanical Area of about 300 acres by extending the boundary of alternative 2 to the north. This alternative was not selected because it enlarged the area beyond the core concentration of unique plants and into areas with more manzanita and tree cover, and make special botanical designation on an area not possessing these unique qualities. Alternative 2 includes the entire area where the 7 sensitive endemic plants are both present and in close association with each other.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:

Public involvement involved sending scoping letters to interested and affected individuals and groups in February of 1996 and again in August of 1996. A legal notice about the project was published in the Cedar City Spectrum on 3 March 1996. A total of 17 comments were received which resulted in the three issues discussed above.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI):

Considering the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment, I have determined that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly (40 CFR 1508.27) affect the quality of the human environment (40 CFR 1508.14); therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. In reviewing the 10 intensity factors at 40 CFR 1508.27 there are no significant effects resulting from this action. These factors are: 1) Designation will have a beneficial impact by providing added protection and permitting added knowledge about these plants; 2) Designation of this area will not cause any change in risk to public health and safety; 3) Designation will promote the use, enjoyment and protection of this unique geographic area and maintain its characteristics; 4) The effects of designating this area are well known and are not controversial; 5) There are no uncertain, unique or unknown risks; 6) This action is not precedent setting and does not require any further connected action; 7) There are no significant cumulative impacts from designating this area; 8) This action will not cause adverse effects, rather it will help promote preservation, maintenance and enjoyment of these unique resources; 9) This action will not affect any Threatened, Endangered or Proposed species or their habitats; 10) This action does not threaten a violation of Federal, State or local law for the protection of the environment. In context this action is local in nature and will not affect National or Regional interests (40 CFR 1508.27).

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

This action constitutes a nonsignificant amendment to the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Dixie National Forest according to the standards specified in FSM 1922.51. The action will not significantly alter the long-term multiple-use goals or objectives for the Forest. There will be no effect on livestock grazing since the area is classified as unsuitable range. There is only a minor change to the standards and guidelines for the area since it is mostly in an inventoried roadless area.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE:

This amendment to the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Dixie National Forest will become effective seven (7) calendar days following publication of the legal notice in the Spectrum as specified in 36 CFR 217.10.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES:

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217.3. A written appeal must be postmarked or received in duplicate by the Appeal Reviewing Officer within 45 days of the date of publication of the legal notice of availability for this decision in the *Salt Lake Tribune* newspaper. The publication date is expected to be near the end of July 2001. Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 217.9 and be mailed to:

Chief, USDA Forest Service
ATTN: Appeals Office, EMC, 3-Central
P.O. Box 96090
Washington, DC 20090-6090

CONTACT PERSON:

For further information about this project, contact Ronald L. Rodriguez, Dixie National Forest, 82 North, 100 East, Cedar City, Utah 84720, phone (435) 865-3732.

JACK A. BLACKWELL
Regional Forester
Intermountain Region

Date